

Zelenskyy: N. Korean troops set to fight

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — North Korean troops are poised to be deployed by Russia on the battlefield in Ukraine as early as this weekend, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Friday.

Western officials have warned that North Korean units joining the fight would stoke the war and bring geopolitical consequences as far away as the Indo-Pacific region.

The possibility has alarmed leaders and deepened diplomatic tensions around the war. A senior official in the Ukrainian presidential office said Friday that Zelenskyy had canceled a planned visit to Kyiv by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the visit was supposed to come after this week's summit in the Russian city of Kazan of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, which Guterres attended. A

photograph of Guterres shaking hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the summit triggered an outcry in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy, in a post on Telegram, said Ukrainian intelligence had determined that "the first North Korean military will be used by Russia in combat zones" between Sunday and Monday.

He said on Telegram that the deployment was "an obvious escalating move by Russia." He didn't provide any further details, including where the North Korean soldiers may be sent.

Russia has been conducting a ferocious summer campaign along the eastern front in Ukraine, gradually compelling Kyiv to surrender ground. But Russia has struggled to push Ukrainian forces out of its Kursk border region following an incursion almost three months ago.

North Korean units were detected on Wednesday in Kursk, according to Ukraine's Main In-

telligence Directorate, known by its acronym GUR.

The soldiers had undergone several weeks of training at bases in eastern Russia and had been equipped with clothes for the upcoming winter, GUR said in a statement late Thursday.

It estimated the number of North Korean soldiers sent by Pyongyang to Russia at around 12,000, including some 500 officers and three generals.

GUR provided no evidence for its claims.

Dutch Defense Minister Ruben Brekelmans said Friday on the social platform X that intelligence reports indicated the North Korean soldiers "will probably first be deployed in Kursk."

The deployment of North Korean forces under a military pact between Moscow and Pyongyang brings a new dimension to the conflict, which is Europe's biggest war since World War II and has cost tens of thousands of lives on both sides, in-

cluding many civilians.

The U.S. said Wednesday that 3,000 North Korean troops have been deployed to Russia and are training at several locations, calling the move very serious.

Zelenskyy said a week ago that his government has intelligence information that 10,000 troops from North Korea are being readied to join Russian forces fighting against his country. He said that a third nation wading into the hostilities would turn the conflict into a "world war."

North Korea had already been supplying ammunition to Russia under a defense pact, but putting boots on the ground could severely complicate a war that has inflamed international politics, with most Western countries supporting Kyiv.

Putin, meanwhile, has looked for support among BRICS countries.

He has neither confirmed nor denied that North Korean troops were in Russia.

Pentagon's IG will audit Israel's use of US weaponry

Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon's inspector general has begun an audit of Israel's "proper use, storage and physical security" of American armaments, including missiles, drones and night vision devices.

The audit will be conducted under the Pentagon's enhanced monitoring process of "accounting for sensitive defense articles" provided to foreign allies, the inspector general's office said in a news release.

The audit, intended to assess the Defense Department's oversight of military aid to Israel,

will unfold amid continuing international criticism of the Israeli military's conduct in the Gaza conflict, which began on Oct. 7, 2023, with an assault on Israel by Hamas that killed about 1,200 people.

But Mollie Halpern, a spokesperson for the inspector general's office, said Thursday that the audit won't review allegations from human rights groups that Israel has improperly used U.S.-supplied munitions against targets in civilian areas. More than 42,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza in the military campaign, according to

health officials in the Hamas-run territory,

The inspector general's announcement said it had previously audited the so-called end use of American systems provided to Ukraine and Iraq and "found significant challenges" regarding that oversight.

In May, the U.S. paused delivery of about 3,500 bombs to Israel — including 2,000-pound explosives that could cause massive damage in the densely packed southern Gaza city of Rafah — amid mounting frustration over the conduct of Prime Minister Benjamin Neta-

nyahu's campaign against Hamas, the Iran-backed group designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. and other nations. The move marked the Biden administration's most serious signal of displeasure since the war started.

But the Pentagon last year quietly escalated military aid to Israel, delivering on requests that included more laser-guided missiles for its Apache gunship fleet, 155mm shells, night vision devices, bunker-buster munitions and new vehicles, according to an internal Defense Department list.

Trump: China's leader will bully Harris

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump said Thursday that China's leader would handle Vice President Kamala Harris "like a baby" if she's elected to the White House, as the former president and his top allies increasingly have moved to infantilize the Democratic nominee.

"If somehow Kamala wins, she'd have to deal with Xi Jinping," conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt said of the Chinese president. "How would he handle her?"

Trump replied, "Like a baby."

"He'd take all the candy away very quickly," Trump continued. "She wouldn't have any idea what happened. It would be like a grand chess master playing a beginner."

Trump has built his political career around name-calling, in-

venting jeers for his opponents going back to his first run for president in 2016, when he slammed Republican primary rivals like "Low Energy" Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida, and "Little" Marco Rubio, the Florida senator. The former president also has a long history of belittling women.

But Trump has unleashed a special array of personal — often condescending — attacks against Harris, from calling her "lazy" — a word long used to demean Black people in racist terms — to insisting she's a "stupid person" and asking whether she is "on drugs." He's also called Harris, the first woman of color to lead a major-party ticket, "slow" and has accused her of having a "low IQ."

The latest line of attack, combining sexism and deeply personal jeers with referring to

Harris as a child, comes with Election Day now barely a week off. His campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the remarks.

The former president, who has escalated his already dark and inflammatory rhetoric in the race's final stretch, spoke at a rally later Thursday in Tempe, Ariz., where he criticized Harris' handling of immigration. He accused Harris of perpetrating "a wicked betrayal of America" and having "orchestrated the most egregious betrayal that any leader in American history has ever inflicted upon our people," even though crime is down.

During an evening event in Las Vegas, Trump compared Harris to "a vulture" in the way he characterized her approach to tax increases.

"Even after Kamala wrecked your economy with inflation, she came after you with tip income, like sort of like a vulture would do," Trump said. "If she gets four more years, Kamala Harris will pick your pockets."

Harris has offered her own share of insults against Trump, calling him "increasingly unhinged and unstable." During a CNN town hall Wednesday she also called Trump a "fascist."

In his Thursday morning interview with Hewitt, Trump said he watched Harris' town hall on CNN and described her as coming off "like a child, almost."

"She's an empty vessel," Trump said. "But she's beautifully pushed around by a very smart, very powerful, very liberal, viciously liberal but very, very smart, powerful party called the Democrats."

Harris warns of 'serious' consequences if Trump wins

Associated Press

CLARKSTON, Ga. — Bruce Springsteen and Barack Obama lent their star power to Kamala Harris' quest for the presidency on Thursday, as the vice president implored Georgia voters to consider the "brutally serious" consequences if Donald Trump wins a second term in the White House.

Harris asked voters to imagine who'll be sitting in the Oval Office just three months from now and think about the new president's priorities.

"It's either Donald Trump in there stewing over his enemies list, or me working for you, checking off my to-do list," she said. "You have the power to make that decision."

The presence of Springsteen, whose career spans five decades, and former President

Obama, still one of the biggest names in Democratic politics, highlights how Harris is leaning on some of the most noteworthy names in the party to help her deliver her closing message and lambaste her opponent.

Obama, who got a rousing reception from the rally crowd at a packed high school football stadium outside Atlanta, told his audience, "I get why people are looking to shake things up, but what I cannot understand is why anybody would think that Donald Trump would shake things up in ways that are good for you."

Harris echoed that message in her speech, warning that "the consequences of him being president again are brutally serious."

The lengthy rally ran well behind schedule and seemingly

took a toll on attendees. While the vast majority of seats remained full, hundreds of people streamed out of the event early as Harris spoke after hours of programming.

The other speakers wasted no time attacking Trump.

Obama argued his successor was always "trying to sell you stuff," was someone who only cares about "his ego, his money, his status," and regularly gives lengthy speeches that are "just word salad."

"We do not need four years of a wannabe king, a wannabe dictator," Obama said before offering Harris as someone "ready for the job."

After arguing Trump is focused only on himself, Obama added, "If you elect Kamala Harris ... she will be focused on you."

Springsteen, too, focused on Trump.

After a performance of "The Promised Land," a ballad off his 1978 album "Darkness on the Edge of Town," Springsteen told the Georgia audience he was backing Harris because he wants "a president who reveres the Constitution."

"There is only one candidate in this election who holds those principles dear, Kamala Harris. She's running to be the 47th president of the United States. Donald Trump is running to be an American tyrant," Springsteen added before playing "Land of Hope and Dreams" and "Dancing in the Dark."

The Trump campaign called Harris' use of Obama and Springsteen "a desperate, last-ditch effort to salvage her spiraling campaign."

Biden makes another attempt at student loan cancellation

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is moving ahead with a new path to student loan cancellation for Americans who face steep medical bills, child care costs and other types of financial hardship that prevent them from repaying their loans.

Announced Friday, the proposed rule is President Joe Biden's third attempt at student loan cancellation as he faces repeated legal challenges from Republican states. His first plan was rejected by the Supreme Court last year, and his second has been temporarily halted by a federal judge in Missouri.

The new rule would have to clear a number of hurdles before it becomes official, and it's unclear if it could be realized before Biden leaves office in three months. Like Biden's oth-

er loan forgiveness proposals, it could face court challenges from conservatives who say it's unconstitutional and unfair.

If finalized, the new rule would allow the Education Department to proactively cancel loans for borrowers if the agency determines they have an 80% chance of being in default on their loans within two years. Others could apply for a review to determine if they meet the criteria for cancellation.

It's meant to help borrowers who are unlikely to ever be able to repay their loans. The Education Department estimates about 8 million Americans would qualify for cancellation.

"For far too long, our broken student loan system has made it too hard for borrowers experiencing heartbreaking and financially devastating hardships

to access relief, and it's not right," said Education Secretary Miguel Cardona.

Those who could be eligible include people with unexpected medical bills, high child care costs and heavy costs related to caring for relatives with chronic illnesses, and those struggling financially in the wake of natural disasters, the Education Department said.

Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., chair of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, called it a "sham plan" designed to curry voters ahead of the presidential election.

"The latest blatant attempt to bribe voters is the hallmark of a desperate administration that's squandered the chance to make meaningful, lasting reform when it comes to college costs," Foxx said in a statement.

Astronauts return to Earth after troubles

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Four astronauts returned to Earth on Friday after a nearly eight-month space station stay extended by Boeing's capsule trouble and Hurricane Milton.

A SpaceX capsule carrying the crew parachuted before dawn into the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida coast after undocking from the International Space Station midweek.

The three Americans and one Russian should have been back two months ago. But their homecoming was stalled by problems with Boeing's new Starliner astronaut capsule, which came back empty in September because of safety concerns.

Then Hurricane Milton interfered, followed by another two weeks of high wind and rough seas.

SpaceX launched the four — NASA's Matthew Dominick, Michael Barratt and Jeanette Epps, and Russia's Alexander Grebenkin — in March.

Barratt, the only space veteran going into the mission, acknowledged the support teams back home that had "to replan, retool and kind of redo everything right along with us ... and helped us to roll with all those punches."

Their replacements are the two Starliner test pilots Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, whose own mission went from eight days to eight months, and two astronauts launched by SpaceX four weeks ago. Those four will remain up there until February.

The space station is now back to its normal crew size of seven — four Americans and three Russians — after months of overflow.

President to formally apologize for 150-year Indian boarding school policy

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — President Joe Biden said he will formally apologize on Friday for the country's role in forcing Indigenous children for over 150 years into boarding schools, where many were physically, emotionally and sexually abused, and more than 950 died.

"I'm doing something I should have done a long time ago: To make a formal apology to the Indian nations for the way we treated their children for so many years," Biden said Thursday as he left the White House for Arizona.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland launched an investigation into the boarding school system shortly after she became the first Native American to lead the agency, and she was to join

Biden during his first diplomatic visit to a tribal nation as president as he was to deliver a speech Friday at the Gila River Indian Community outside Phoenix.

"I would never have guessed in a million years that something like this would happen," Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna in New Mexico, told The Associated Press. "It's a big deal to me. I'm sure it will be a big deal to all of Indian Country."

The investigation she launched found that at least 18,000 children — some as young as 4 — were taken from their parents and forced to attend schools that sought to assimilate them into white society while federal and state authorities sought to dispossess tribal

nations of their land.

The investigation documented 973 deaths — while acknowledging the figure is likely higher — and 74 gravesites associated with the more than 500 schools.

No president has ever formally apologized for the forced removal of these children — an element of genocide as defined by the U.N. — or the U.S. government's actions to decimate Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian peoples.

The Interior Department conducted listening sessions and gathered the testimony of survivors. One of the recommendations of the final report was an acknowledgment of, and apology for, the boarding school era. Haaland said she took that to Biden, who agreed that it was necessary.

Israeli strikes kill 38 people in Gaza, 3 journalists in Lebanon

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Israeli strikes killed 38 people in Gaza and three journalists in Lebanon on Friday as growing worries about supply shortages in Gaza and international pressure for a cease-fire mounted.

The deaths reported by Gaza health officials were the latest in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, where people have in recent days lined up for bread outside the city's only bakery in operation. They come a day after United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Israel had accomplished its objective of "effectively dismantling" Hamas and implored both sides to revive negotiations.

Also on Friday, an Israeli airstrike on guesthouses where journalists were staying in southeast Lebanon killed three

media staffers. Outside of now-collapsed buildings rented by various media outlets, cars marked "PRESS" lay covered in dust and rubble after the strike, Associated Press photos showed.

The Israeli army did not issue a warning prior to the strike. Representatives of the news networks and Lebanese politicians accused Israel of war crimes and intentionally targeting journalists.

The Beirut-based pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen TV said two of its staffers — camera operator Ghassan Najjar and broadcast technician Mohammed Rida — were among the journalists killed early Friday. Al-Manar TV of Lebanon's Hezbollah group said its camera operator Wissam Qassim was also killed in the airstrike on the Hasbaya region.

Al-Mayadeen's director Ghassan bin Jiddo alleged that the Israeli strike on a compound housing journalists was intentional and directed at those covering elements of its military offensive. He vowed that the Beirut-based station would continue its work.

Lebanon's Information Minister Ziad Makary said the journalists were killed while broadcasting what he called Israel's crimes, and noted they were among a large group of members of the media.

"This is an assassination, after monitoring and tracking, with premeditation and planning, as there were 18 journalists present at the location representing seven media institutions," he wrote in a post on X.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike.

Gangs in Haiti shoot UN copter in flight

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Gangs on Thursday opened fire and hit a U.N. helicopter, forcing it to land in Port-au-Prince in the latest attack in Haiti's capital as violence surges once again.

No one was injured as several rounds of gunfire hit the helicopter that was carrying three crew members and 15 passengers, according to a U.N. source who was not authorized to confirm the incident. The helicopter, which had departed from Port-au-Prince before it was attacked, landed safely, the source said.

The attack comes five months after Haiti's main international airport reopened following coordinated gang attacks that forced it to close for nearly three months.

The violence has spilled to nearby areas including Arcahaie, where some 50 suspected gang members died this week after attacking the coastal town located just northwest of the capital.

Among the dead are at least a dozen gunmen who drowned after their boat capsized, a government official said Thursday.

While the majority were killed by police, a group of gunmen drowned on Wednesday after their boat hit the reef as they ferried ammunition to gangs attacking the town of Arcahaie, said Wilner René from Haiti's Civil Protection Agency.

He told Radio Caraïbes that the attack began on Monday, with gunmen burning homes and cars across Arcahaie.

When the gangs ran out of ammunition, they hid in nearby areas and were ferreted out by residents and police, he said.

Storm blows away from Philippines after leaving scores dead but might do U-turn

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Tropical Storm Trami blew away from the northwestern Philippines on Friday, leaving at least 82 people dead in landslides and extensive flooding that forced authorities to scramble for more rescue boats to save thousands of terrified people, who were trapped, some on their roofs.

But the onslaught may not be over: State forecasters raised the rare possibility that the storm — the 11th and one of the deadliest to hit the Philippines this year — could make a U-turn next week as it is pushed back by high-pressure winds in the South China Sea.

A Philippine provincial police chief said Friday that 49 people

were killed mostly in landslides set off by Trami in Batangas province south of Manila. That brought the overall death toll from the storm to at least 82.

Eleven other villagers remain missing in Batangas, Col. Jacinto Malinao Jr. told The Associated Press by telephone from the lakeside town of Talisay, where he stood beside a villager whose wife and child were buried in the deep mound of mud, boulders and trees.

With the use of a backhoe and shovels, police scrambled to search into 10 feet of mud, rocks and debris and found a part of a head and foot that apparently were those of the missing woman and child.

"He's simply devastated," Malinao said of the villager, a

fisherman, whose wife and child were buried in the landslide that happened Thursday afternoon amid torrential rains while he was away tending to fish cages in a lake.

"He's in shock and couldn't speak and we're only asking him to point to where their bedroom was located so we can dig in that part," Malinao said.

The storm was last tracked Friday afternoon blowing 255 miles west of the northwestern Philippine province of Ilocos Sur with sustained winds of up to 59 mph and gusts of up to 78 mph.

It was moving northwestward at 19 mph toward Vietnam, which is forecast to be lashed by Trami starting on Sunday if it stays on course.

Starriest World Series in decades on tap

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Even 8-year-old Charlie Freeman is excited about a Dodgers-Yankees World Series.

"He's at Universal (Studios) right now with a couple of his buddies, but he goes, 'Daddy, I can't wait for the World Series to start tomorrow,'" Los Angeles first baseman Freddie Freeman said at the last workout before Friday's opener. "He's on YouTube and seeing all the videos about Yankees-Dodgers. So you're starting to get a hint of how big this could be."

This will be the 12th Dodgers-Yankees matchup and the first in 43 years. The rivalry dates to 1941, when the Dodgers were in Brooklyn and Joe DiMaggio's Yankees were seeking their fifth title in six years.

"You can be the best player. You can do whatever you want," Yankees star Juan Soto said, "but at the end of the day, people remember you because you won a World Series."

Broadway vs. Hollywood has produced the starriest Series in decades, if not ever. The League Championship Series had the highest U.S. TV ratings since 2017, and that's been dwarfed by viewership of the Dodgers from Japan driven by interest in Shohei Ohtani.

"You could easily argue that on a global scale, the Yankees and the Dodgers are the most followed, the most supported, the most visible," Los Angeles manager Dave Roberts said.

This figures to be the first World Series featuring five MVPs: the Dodgers' Ohtani, Freeman and Mookie Betts, and

the Yankees' Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton. There hasn't even been a Fall Classic with four since 1971.

Ohtani and Judge are the likely MVPs this year, marking the first Series to feature both since San Francisco's Buster Posey and Detroit's Miguel Cabrera in 2012. This will be the first Series with two 50-home run hitters in Judge (58) and Ohtani (54).

In an age of expanding playoffs, this is just the fifth World Series since the Wild Card Era started in 1995 involving the teams with the best records in each league.

"I'm sure I'm going to feel how special it is," Ohtani said through an interpreter.

Players practiced in 85-degree weather as the sun highlighted Dodger Stadium's sky blue, yellow, light orange and

sea foam green seats. Freeman, who has a bad ankle, insisted he will be in the lineup for the opener.

While the Dodgers are seeking their eighth title and second in five years, the Yankees are in the World Series for the first time since winning No. 27 in 2009.

"This is where the real fun starts," Judge said.

Judge realizes a title is necessary for membership among the Yankees' greats.

"They definitely got a different aura walking around here when you got a couple of rings on your fingers," he said. "I think that's the biggest thing, is that you see that they're battle-tested. They've been through the grind. They've been through the ups and downs and they came out on top."

Ohtani ready for the spotlight in his first Fall Classic

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Shohei Ohtani sat behind a small table and waited.

Across the center field plaza at Dodger Stadium, a horde of media listened for the signal. Once it came, the stampede was on. Reporters and photographers ran, ignoring security's commands to walk, in a beeline to reach Ohtani first.

Minus any screaming, it could have been the Beatles playing Dodger Stadium in 1966.

"That's what I do whenever he shows up in the clubhouse," Dodgers reliever Brent Honeywell joked.

Thursday's chaos was likely

just the start as the Dodgers and New York Yankees prepared for Friday night's World Series opener.

"It just feels like it has finally arrived," Ohtani said through an interpreter.

He may well have been talking about himself.

"I have been watching the World Series every year and watching in the sense of disappointment because I couldn't play in one," Ohtani said, referring to his six losing seasons with the Los Angeles Angels before joining the Dodgers on a \$700 million contract last off-season. "But this year, I'm able to participate in one and very much looking forward to it."

Ohtanimania has come to the Fall Classic. Renowned for his unprecedented two-way skills, Ohtani hasn't pitched this season while recovering from right elbow surgery. Dodgers manager Dave Roberts re-affirmed Thursday there's no chance Ohtani takes the mound against New York.

"There is no possibility, none whatsoever," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

But all eyes are still on him — not a new phenomenon for the 30-year-old international star.

Ohtani appeared unruffled by the pushing and shoving and wall of cameras and mics pointed at him. He rested his arms on the table, his fingers laced to-

gether, a slight smile on his face.

"The guy never wavers," said Honeywell, wearing a T-shirt commemorating Ohtani's historic 50 home runs and 50 stolen bases in a season. "He is as advertised."

Yankees bench coach Brad Ausmus managed Ohtani and the Angels in 2019. Ohtani played a shortened season that year since he was recovering from Tommy John surgery at the start and had knee surgery near the end.

"It wouldn't shock me if he went 60-60 and 20 wins a year from now," Ausmus said. "This guy is the greatest baseball player ever, and there's not a close second."

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Stafford throws 4 TD passes in Rams' win

Associated Press

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua have missed most of the season due to injury, and the Los Angeles Rams' dismal record reflected it.

When both star receivers came back for the same prime-time showcase, they provided exactly what Matthew Stafford and the Rams have been missing all year — and it was something the Minnesota Vikings couldn't match.

Kupp caught a touchdown pass and Nacua had 106 yards receiving in their returns to the lineup, and Stafford passed for 279 yards and four TDs in Los Angeles' 30-20 victory over the Vikings on Thursday night.

Demarcus Robinson caught two TD passes from Stafford for the Rams (3-4), who won back-to-back games for the first time

this season with 386 yards from an offense that looked exponentially more dangerous with its top two receivers in uniform.

"They brought a lot of energy to our team, and a ton of confidence," said Stafford, who had thrown just three TD passes in the Rams' first six games combined. "It's not only just the offense. I know the defense feels it too when those guys are out there making plays."

After missing the previous five games, Nacua had seven catches while posting the eighth 100-yard game of his short career. Kupp returned from a four-game absence with five catches for 51 yards, including a 27-yard grab for a key first down late in the fourth quarter.

"It was just so much fun," Kupp said. "Offensively, we were just able to find ways to keep the sticks moving. Guys

were just doing their jobs, and it was pretty cool to see us going."

Kyren Williams rushed for 97 yards and caught an early TD pass for the Rams. Robinson caught a 25-yard TD pass late in the third quarter to put Los Angeles ahead, and he made a 10-yard TD catch with 6:17 to play for a 28-20 lead.

Byron Young then sacked Sam Darnold for a safety with 1:36 left, grabbing Darnold's facemask on the play. Officials didn't throw a flag, sealing the Rams' second win in five days after going 1-4 before their bye.

"I believe in this group," said coach Sean McVay, who became the winningest coach in Rams history with his 80th victory. "I saw resolve. I didn't see a flinch. ... We've done a good job of getting ourselves back to where we wanted to be."

McVay also won his first

head-to-head meeting with Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell, who was his offensive coordinator during the Rams' Super Bowl championship season three years ago.

"I think we were close on some plays," O'Connell said. "But when you're playing against that quarterback, and those receivers getting healthy and getting out there and making some plays for them, I just think it comes down to (whether we) can get enough rush and coverage working together to maybe not give a quarterback like that a couple extra clicks."

Darnold passed for 240 yards for the Vikings (5-2), who followed up their first loss of the season with an ineffective defensive performance. Minnesota also lost starting left tackle Christian Darrisaw to a left knee injury late in the first half.

More star NFL wide receivers could be on the move

Associated Press

DeAndre Hopkins, Davante Adams and Amari Cooper have already been traded. Who's next?

The Jets got things started by acquiring Adams last week, reuniting the three-time All-Pro with Aaron Rodgers in New York. They were rusty in their first game together since 2021. Adams caught just three passes on nine targets for 30 yards in a 37-15 loss to Pittsburgh.

Cooper went from woeful Cleveland to Buffalo and quickly fit in with Josh Allen. He had four catches for 66 yards and one touchdown in the Bills' 34-10 win over Tennessee.

The two-time defending Super Bowl champion Chiefs jumped into the receiver sweepstakes this week and grabbed Hopkins from the Titans, giving Patrick Mahomes an accomplished playmaker to join Travis Kelce.

Hopkins, a three-time All-

Pro, helps replace Rashee Rice, who is out for the season. The Chiefs also have been without Marquise "Hollywood" Brown since the start of the season. JuJu Smith-Schuster missed last week's game with a hamstring injury.

Other high-profile players could be on the move before the deadline. Here are a few names to keep an eye on:

■ **Cooper Kupp:** A Super Bowl MVP when the Los Angeles Rams beat Cincinnati following the 2021 season, Kupp hasn't stayed healthy. He's missed 17 games over the past 2½ seasons. The 31-year-old returned to the lineup on Thursday night and caught five passes for 51 yards and one TD in Los Angeles' win over Minnesota. The Rams (3-4) are in the mix in an up-for-grabs NFC West, so they may not want to part with one of their best players.

■ **Tee Higgins:** Sticking with receivers here. The Bengals

(3-4) could land a boatload of picks for Higgins, who is only 25 and playing this season on a franchise tag. With Ja'Marr Chase set to get a contract similar to Justin Jefferson's, Cincinnati could decide to move Higgins. The Bengals are a notoriously frugal franchise, so it's possible even though the team should surround Joe Burrow with as much talent as possible.

■ **Maxx Crosby:** Trading the three-time Pro Bowl edge rusher wouldn't make the most sense for Las Vegas, but Crosby said last week: "I'm not here to rebuild. I'm here to win. So I don't know, whatever that means." Crosby is only 27 and signed for two more years. A package for him would have to include multiple top draft picks, which could help the Raiders (2-5) in their quest to get a franchise quarterback.

■ **Budda Baker:** The six-time Pro Bowl safety has spent his entire eight-year career in

Arizona, but he's set to become a free agent after the season, and the Cardinals (3-4) already chose not to give him a contract extension. Like the Rams, they're just one game behind Seattle (4-3) in a division that's more winnable now that the 49ers (3-4) are struggling. Still, Arizona isn't going to be a Super Bowl contender, and if Baker isn't in the team's future plans, getting draft picks for him makes sense.

■ **Miles Sanders:** It's hard to believe Sanders rushed for 1,269 yards and 11 TDs just two years ago in Philadelphia. After signing a big free-agent deal with Carolina, Sanders hasn't been the same. He doesn't have much help around him, either. Sanders ran for only 432 yards last season and averaged 3.3 yards per carry. He has 132 yards this year and his average is up to 4.0. The Panthers (1-6) are rebuilding and need all the draft picks they can get.

Klay Thompson scores 22 as Mavericks defeat Spurs

Associated Press

DALLAS — Luka Dončić had 28 points and 10 rebounds, Klay Thompson added 22 points in his Dallas debut and the Mavericks beat the San Antonio Spurs 120-109 in the opener for both teams Thursday night.

Kyrie Irving had 15 points for the defending Western Conference champions, who got eight assists from Dončić and seven rebounds from Thompson.

Victor Wembanyama shot just 5 of 18 from the field for 17 points to open the young French phenom's second year with the Spurs. Jeremy Sochan and Julian Champagnie scored 18 apiece.

Celtics 122, Wizards 102: Jayson Tatum had 25 points and 11 rebounds in 29 minutes, and visiting Boston cruised to a victory over Washington.

Jaylen Brown scored 27 points in the Celtics' first road game of the season. Derrick White had 19 and Payton Pritchard added 15 as the defending NBA champions extended their winning streak against Washington to five games.

Jordan Poole scored 20 of his 26 points before halftime in the rebuilding Wizards' season opener, and Jonas Valanciunas added 18 in his Washington debut.

After taking their first double-digit lead just before halftime, the Celtics outscored the Wizards 34-19 in the third quarter to put the game out of reach.

Thunder 102, Nuggets 87: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 28 points, Chet Holmgren added 25 as part of a stellar all-around performance and visiting Oklahoma City beat Denver in the season opener for both teams.

Holmgren proved to be a handful on both ends of the floor. He tied a career high with 14 rebounds, and had five assists and blocked four shots. Reserve Aaron Wiggins added 15 points.

It was an important divisional game right out of the gate. The Thunder and Nuggets both finished 57-25 last season, with the Thunder earning the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference by virtue of a tiebreaker.

Reigning NBA MVP Nikola Jokic had 16 points, 13 assists

and 12 rebounds for Denver.

Jokic's point guard partner, Jamal Murray, had 12 points on 4-of-14 shooting. Christian Braun added 16 points, while Aaron Gordon, fresh off signing a new contract extension, added 12 points. Denver was 7 of 39 on 3-pointers.

Timberwolves 117, Kings 115: Anthony Edwards hit a pair of free throws with 2.4 seconds remaining and visiting Minnesota spoiled Sacramento's opener by beating the Kings.

Edwards got fouled by Domantas Sabonis on a drive with the game tied and calmly hit the free throws to give him 32 points.

Keegan Murray's 3-point attempt rimmed out at the buzzer for the Kings.

Julius Randle led the Timberwolves with 33 points in his second game after being acquired in a trade from New York this month.

Demar DeRozan scored 26 points to lead the Kings in his debut for Sacramento after being acquired this summer in a sign-and-trade from Chicago. Sabonis added 24 points and Murray had 23.

NBA probes Embiid's availability

Associated Press

The NBA is investigating why Philadelphia center Joel Embiid did not play in the team's nationally televised season opener against Milwaukee.

The league confirmed the investigation on Thursday. It was opened as part of the NBA's player participation policy that went into effect last season.

Such a move was to be expected. The NBA has said that any time a star player misses a game — it defines "star" as someone who was an All-Star or All-NBA selection in any of the previous three seasons, and Embiid is one of those — an investigation can be opened to "promote compliance" with league rules and can include "independent medical review and related determinations regarding player availability."

Embiid — who helped the U.S. win Olympic gold at the Paris Games — missed the entire pre-season and was ruled out for Wednesday's opener against Milwaukee with the 76ers citing "left knee injury management." Embiid has a long history of injury issues.

Embiid has never played more than 68 games in a season and was limited to 39 last season largely because of knee surgery.

Messi earned more than 22 other MLS teams' payrolls

Associated Press

BETHESDA, Md. — Inter Miami's Lionel Messi earned more than the entire payrolls of 22 other Major League Soccer teams, and Olivier Giroud has \$3,675,000 in annualized total compensation under the contract he signed to join Los Angeles FC in July.

The Major League Soccer Players Association released its salary update on Thursday and Messi's \$12 million base salary

and \$20,446,667 in total compensation from Inter Miami remained the same as in the initial listing in May.

Those figures cover what Messi receives from his MLS deal, which runs through the 2025 season, including any marketing bonus and agent's fees. They do not account for any additional agreements with the team or its affiliates, or for any performance bonuses.

Average guaranteed compen-

sation rose 9.8% to \$596,226 from \$543,207.

Miami, the league's regular-season Supporters Shield champion, led the league with a record \$41.7 million payroll, double all but Toronto (\$31.8 million), Los Angeles FC (\$22.1 million), the LA Galaxy (\$22 million) and Nashville (\$21.9 million).

Players on Cincinnati (\$21 million) and Houston (\$20.5 million) also totaled more than Messi.

Montreal (\$11.4 million), Philadelphia (\$13.8 million) and Dallas (\$13.9 million) are among the lowest payrolls.

Giroud, a 38-year-old striker, joined LA in July on a free transfer from AC Milan. He has a \$2.8 million annualized salary for 2024.

Miami midfielder Sergio Busquets is second in the league in salary at \$8,499,996 and has \$8,774,996 in total compensation.

Bobrovsky and Panthers beat Rangers 3-1

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Sergei Bobrovsky made 24 saves for his 400th career win, and the Florida Panthers defeated the New York Rangers 3-1 on Thursday.

Anton Lundell and Carter Verhaeghe scored early first-period goals for Florida. Lundell opened the scoring 44 seconds in, beating Igor Shesterkin alone in the slot. Verhaeghe added to the Panthers' lead at the 2:42 mark.

Alexis Lafreniere scored 4:44 into the game to halve Florida's early lead, but it was the only time New York was able to beat Bobrovsky.

Sam Bennett gave Florida a two-goal lead 6:59 into the second period.

From there, Florida held on to win in a rematch of last spring's Eastern Conference Final, which the Panthers won in six games.

Shesterkin finished with 26 saves for the Rangers.

Wild 4, Lightning 2: Matt Boldy broke a tie 54 seconds into the third period, and visiting Minnesota remained unbeaten in regulation, topping Tampa Bay.

Minnesota improved to 5-0-2. Marc-Andre Fleury made 23 saves for his first victory of the season and the 562nd of his career.

Boldy's power-play goal gave Minnesota a 3-2 lead. Kirill Kaprizov scored twice, the second into an empty net, and Joel Eriksson Ek had a goal.

Brandon Hagel and Nikita Kucherov scored in the second period for Tampa Bay. The Lightning lost for the first time in four home games.

Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 14 saves in his third loss in a row.

Kaprizov gave the Wild a 1-0 lead at 6:23 of the first period. Tampa Bay rallied on second-period goals 2:36 apart by Hagel and Kucherov. Ek tied it late in the second.

Stars 5, Bruins 2: Casey

DeSmith made 25 saves, Tyler Seguin and Matt Duchene had a goal and two assists each and visiting Dallas handed Boston its third straight loss.

The Stars also got goals from Jason Robertson, Logan Stankoven and Roope Hintz. Mason Marchment had two assists as Dallas scored four unanswered goals after David Pastrnak gave Boston a 1-0 lead at 11:57 of the first period.

Jeremy Swayman made 27 saves for the Bruins, who cut the Stars' lead to 4-2 on Justin Brazeau's goal at 10:41 of the second period. Still down two goals with time winding down in the third period, Boston pulled Swayman.

Hintz supplied the finishing touch with an empty-netter with 2:02 remaining.

Red Wings 5, Devils 3: Patrick Kane scored a go-ahead, power-play goal with 3:32 to play and host Detroit extended its winning streak to three games, beating New Jersey.

Christian Fischer and Alex DeBrincat scored 26 seconds apart late in the first period for Detroit. Dylan Larkin also supplied a power-play goal and Michael Rasmussen added an empty-netter, while Cam Talbot made 40 saves.

Nico Hischier scored two power-play goals for the Devils, who have lost three straight. Jacob Markstrom stopped 15 shots.

Devils forward Erik Haula scored in his 700th game.

Blues 5, Maple Leafs 1: Jordan Binnington made 40 saves, Dylan Holloway scored twice and visiting St. Louis spoiled Toronto coach Craig Berube's first game against the Blues since they fired him in December. Berube led St. Louis to the franchise's only Stanley Cup in 2019.

Philip Broberg, Alexandre Texier and Jake Neighbours also scored to help St. Louis improve to 5-3-0. Jordan Kyrou and Pavel Buchnevich each had two assists.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson scored for Toronto, and Joseph Woll stopped 22 in his first start of the season.

The Blues opened the scoring on their third shot when Broberg fired a puck through traffic. Holloway doubled the advantage on a power play.

Ekman-Larsson got the Maple Leafs on the board in the second with his first goal for Toronto, but Texier made it 3-1 before the period was out.

Hurricanes 4, Flames 2: Pyotr Kochetkov made 30 saves and assisted on Eric Robinson's empty-netter, helping visiting Carolina beat Calgary 4-2 for their first loss in regulation this season.

Martin Necas had a goal and an assist and Jack Roslovic and Seth Jarvis also scored for Carolina (4-2-0). Sebastian Aho had an assist to extend his points streak to five games.

Jake Bean scored his first goal for the Flames (5-1-1). Jonathan Huberdeau also scored and Dan Vladar made 39 saves.

Quick goals by Necas and Roslovic to start the second period gave Carolina a 3-0 lead by 1:59. Bean scored in the second for Calgary, and Huberdeau cut it to a goal with 6:55 left in the third.

Avalanche 5, Utah 1: Justus Annunen had 25 saves, and visiting Colorado beat Utah for their fourth straight win.

Ross Colton opened the scoring with his seventh goal of the season. Cale Makar also scored in the first. Casey Mittelstadt and Ivan Ivan struck both scored in the second period — Ivan's goal on a power play. Joel Kiviranta had an unassisted goal late to cap the scoring.

Colton struck midway through the first period, snapping the puck past Vejmelka on a power play. Makar then blasted home a second long-distance snap shot, extending Colorado's lead.

Mittelstadt sent in a close-range wrist shot for a three-goal

advantage. Ivan's power-play goal put Colorado up 4-0 heading into the third.

Karel Vejmelka made 21 saves in his second start for Utah. Lawson Crouse had Utah's lone goal with 4:32 left in the game.

Jets 4, Kraken 3: Nikolaj Ehlers scored the winning goal 1:26 into overtime, and visiting Winnipeg remained unbeaten this season with a win over Seattle.

Nino Niederreiter had two goals for Winnipeg, Gabriel Vilardi scored one and Connor Hellebuyck had 29 saves as the Jets improved to 7-0.

Matty Beniers had two goals and an assist for Seattle.

Beniers scored first at 11:27 of the first period to put the Kraken ahead 1-0. Seattle's lead disappeared in the second period, when Niederreiter tied it with a goal at 3:56.

Vilardi snuck one past Kraken goaltender Joey Daccord at 15:05 of the second to give the Jets a 2-1 lead.

Niederreiter scored again just over four minutes into the third period to put the Jets ahead by two.

Jordan Eberle made it a one-score game with 9:58 left with his sixth goal in Seattle's first eight games, and Beniers tapped in his second with 3:22 remaining to tie it at 3-3.

Daccord finished with 32 saves.

Kings 3, Sharks 2: Warren Foegele scored twice and Los Angeles won their home opener over San Jose to keep them winless.

The Kings jumped all over the Sharks with all three goals in a span of 7:05 in the first period.

Foegele was brought in to add toughness and grit to Los Angeles, and he showed those traits when positioning himself around the net to pick up his two goals.

Jordan Spence also had a goal and David Rittich made 24 saves.